

MEDIA GONE WILD

Media and Marketing Messages to Girls about Sex, Sexuality, and Being Sexy

Packaging Girlhood



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Chapters

What Girls Wear
What Girls Watch
What Girls Hear
What Girls Read
What Girls Play/Do

Where We Started

An assignment in our Gender Issues courses

Choose a cultural product and read it in terms of its gender messages. You can choose Disney movies, deodorant packages, cereal boxes, greeting cards, toys, magazines, whatever!

Data Collection The "Stuff" of Girls' Worlds

How did we decide what to analyze?

- 600 surveys, girls ages 8-20 (girlzone.com)
- Focus groups & interviews with parents, school counselors, and girls

What we did with the "stuff" Content Analyses

Counting



Thematic
analysis

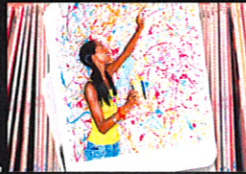


GIRL POWER

*From the CosmoGIRL!
web site*

"What's your power
color?"

Wear it. Write with it.
Bathe in it (why not?) for
that hit of energy that
beats Starbucks any day!"



The New Girl Power

- The power to shop
- The power to attract boys
- The power to choose among different
TYPES of girls to be

TYPES

a girl can be either

FOR the boys

or

ONE of
the boys



YOU'LL NEVER FIND

"Fast runner, black loving, mystery reading,
fantasy writing, knot tying, screemo
listening, child loving, backpacking, rock
climbing, hangs out with boy scouts, hyper,
gymnastics girl
...who also wears pink!"

Amber, age 14

WHY?

She's very hard to market to...

Maintaining stereotypes helps marketers

CHRONOLOGICAL TOUR THROUGH THE AGES with an
eye towards sexual messages:

Pretty in Pink Princesses: one step away
from hot pink and sexy

Tweens: Transitioning to Sexy, Shopping
Diva

Middle-Schoolers (the New Teens) and
Real Teens

Little Girls

Sisters, friends, and helpers of boys
 Pretty in Pink Princesses
 Little Shoppers
 Little Teens
 Divas

Pretty in Pink Princesses



African
 American
 Princesses

Inclusion, but in what?

Pseudo-
 Multiculturalism?



Disney Princesses



Disney Girls

- Are women (with Barbie doll bodies)
- Are gossips and chatterboxes
- Gain power through being "sexy-pretty", becoming male, or being evil
- Have no support systems
- Rarely have mothers (but when they do, they do housework)
- Are nothing without a man



FIONA THE OGRE



Dora the Explorer



- Map
- Backpack
- Shorts
- Rope

"Let's go!"

The New Dora



The New Dora

- Older stereotype of domesticated woman
- Newer stereotype of party girl

Little Teens and Divas



GET READY TO ROCK!





Padded Bras for 6-year-olds

The padded "Bratz bralettes" were among more than 30 different junior bra styles starting at size six on sale.

Bratz distributor "Funtastic": The idea of the padding is for girls to be discreet as they develop," a spokeswoman said.



A very scary Halloween



What's wrong with pink?



Why does Victoria's Secret give away a cute stuffed animal with a purchase?



Tween is a Marketing Term

Used almost exclusively to mean

TWEEN GIRLS

Why?



Marketing to "tweens"

Selling the Teenage Lifestyle through transitional items

Cherry Cola Lip Gloss

On Secret Sparkle Body Spray for little girls. "It becomes addictive. It has tremendous stickiness, and that helps us gain the exposure we need."

Director of Mattel's Girl Online Division



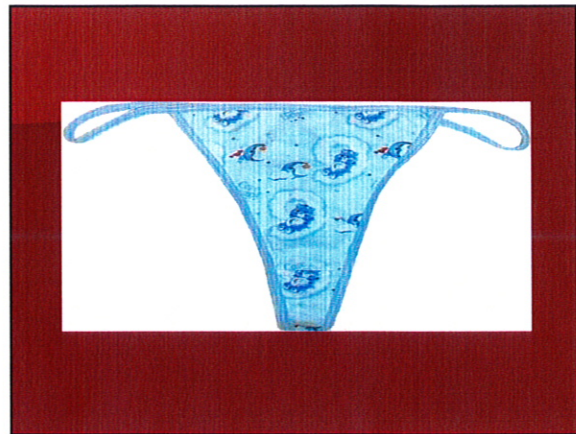
Club Libby Lu



Limite

A Transitional store, where bikini panties, lip gloss, and Webkinz are all sold together.

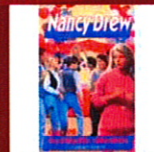




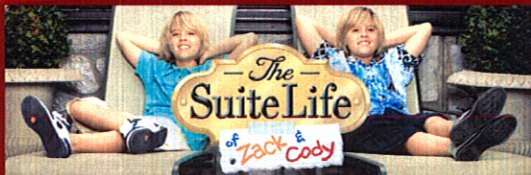
American Girl Enterprise



Nancy Drew (New and Improved)



Tween TV?



"Series classic": Zack and Cody convince Mr. Moseby to let them open a teen night club... "We'll do a '60s night. Lava lamps, psychedelic posters, live music, and [caged] go-go girls."

Zack: All right, Max (a girl friend), dance with as many guys as possible, because the more they sweat, the more drinks they'll buy.

Max: What's in it for me?

Zack: Ten bucks and a big, old kiss from Zack.

Max: I'll take the cash. Hold the lips.



KidzBop

■ Toxic



TOXIC

- With a taste of your lips, I'm on a ride.
You're toxic. I'm slipping under with a
taste of poison paradise. I'm addicted to
you, don't you know that you're toxic. And
I love what you do. Don't you know that
you're toxic?

Sexualized Innocence

Lately theorists, journalists, and parents are concerned that girlhood has become more sexualized in our society (APA TF on the Sexualization of Girls, 2007) but few studies of girlhood exist.

Some have argued that pink and girly no longer represents girlhood innocence because it so quickly gets transformed into hot pink and black lace



Sexualization

APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls (2007)

www.apa.org

APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls

- Formed by recommendation of the American Psychological Association's Committee on Women in Psychology (CWP)
- Established Feb 2005
- Report released Feb 19, 2007

Task Force Charge

To examine whether there was evidence for

- sexualization of girls;
- whether it has increased;
- the causes;
- the harm.

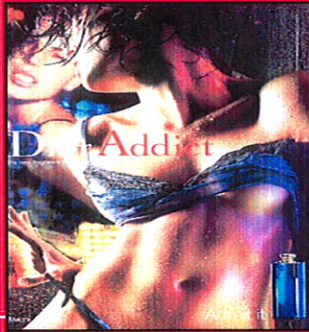
Definition of Sexualization (2007)

4 definitional points

A person's value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics
-- Valued only for Sexuality



A person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy

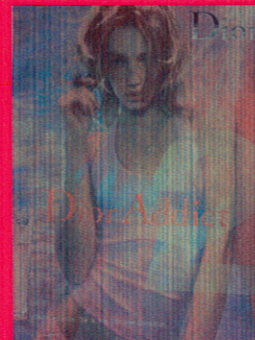


3. A person is made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making

Sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person.



"striptease," "owner of the most talked about breasts," "booters with hooters"



Age Compression

- Older made to look younger



- In one MTV music video, the popular pop celebrity, Fergie, dances around in a short Girl Scout uniform; in another, a school girl's uniform.



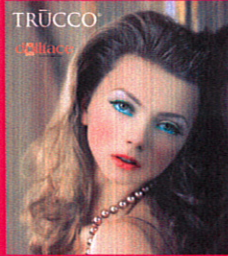
Younger Made to Look Older



Shocking when done

Child is made to look years older thus blurring the boundaries between adulthood and childhood.

This illusion of sexual maturity is created with serious facial expressions, the absence of clothing, adult hairstyles and makeup, and certain body postures and gestures (Cortese, 1999).



More likely to see older women made to look like little girls

E.g.

In a Victoria's Secret Christmas special on TV featuring sexy models in baby doll pajamas and lingerie, dragging a big teddy bear across the stage.

Younger girls

There are, in the Task Force on Sexualization of Girls report, very few media or marketing examples of little girls made to look like sex objects. But plenty of examples of products sold to girls to encourage them to self-sexualize.

Products: Bratz Dolls



Response from Isaac Larian

Larian, head of MGA Entertainment

- "it's a bunch of garbage. Bratz dolls . . . promote diversity, they promote playing sports, they promote saving the planet. If plastic toys are setting up the morality of this world we are all in big trouble"
- "I don't have a problem with my nieces or my children wearing the same clothes because there's nothing wrong with them."

Not just Bratz: Trollz dolls (2006)



Differentiating Sexualization of Teens from Younger Girls

- Similar to adult women, adolescent girls exist in a sexual world in which they are seen as objects for others' use and where they are judged and sometimes exploited in terms of their performance as objects.



- Teens are asked to eroticize themselves as objects, even fetishizing the accoutrements of objectification through the strong emphasis on glamour and "hot" accessories and clothing as advertised in teen magazines.

Perhaps not so new. . .

- Calvin Klein Jean's 1995 campaign with young girls and boys undressing, mimicking child pornography (Giroux, 1996)



- Abercrombie & Fitch had to pull their catalogue of scantily dressed teens



The Research

Teaches us about how pervasive a presence this is.

Media Studies

- Pervasive sexualization of girls and women, in every media format studied
 - television, music videos, music lyrics, cartoons, magazines, sports media, video games, internet, advertising
- Most did not look specifically at girls/children
 - but girls use portrayals of older teens and women as models so research on young women is highly relevant

Television

- Female characters more likely than male characters to be provocatively dressed
- One study found 11.5% of sexual comments were sexually objectifying
 - almost all were about women
- Another study looked at 81 TV episodes
 - 84% had an incident of sexual harassment
 - average number per episode: 3.4
 - sexist comments (calling women *broad*, *bimbo*, *dumb ass*)
 - sexual comments (referring to body parts, e.g. *jugs*, *knockers*, *hooters*)

Music Videos

- High levels of sexual content, and much of it sexually objectifies women
 - Women dressed in provocative clothing
 - Serve as decorative objects
 - Portrayed as being sexually available
- Not just rap or hip-hop
 - also country music videos
 - music videos shown on MTV

Music Lyrics

- Fewer systematic studies
- But a recent (2006) study of 164 songs by 16 popular artists
 - 15% of lyrics sexually degraded women
- "So blow me bitch I don't rock for cancer! I rock for the cash and the topless dancers" (Kid Rock, 1998)
- "Don'tcha wish your girlfriend was hot like me?" (Pussycat Dolls, 2005)
- "I tell the hos all the time, Bitch get in my car" (50 Cent, 2005)
- "Ho shake your ass" (Ying Yang Twins, 2003)

Is Sexualization Objectification?

Yes, but now we're concerned with ever younger girls being objectified.

Objectification theory has been around for some time.

Main theme of Sexualization is Objectification

- Sexual objectification occurs when a person's body or body parts are separated out from her person, when a person's body is commodified for others' consumption or use (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)
- Objectification leaves women passive and subjects to the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975)

Objectification Theory

- Sexualized evaluation of women's bodies occurs with "tremendous variety and monotonous similarity"
- Culturally-specific, narrow definitions of beauty for women



Self-Objectification

Is a somewhat newer idea

Why do girls self-objectify?

- Positive feedback from culture if you meet the standards
- "Eye-catching" women get the goods!
 - Interpersonal outcomes
 - Achievement outcomes
- ie. Physical attractiveness functions as a kind of "currency" for women
(Beauty = sexy = power)

For teens: 2 kinds of sexualization

- Invitations to self-sexualize
- Portrayals of sexualized teens
real and pop star

Invitations to self-sexualize may be more dangerous because invite a perspective of objectification of own body

CONSEQUENCES TO SEXUALIZATION AND OBJECTIFICATION?

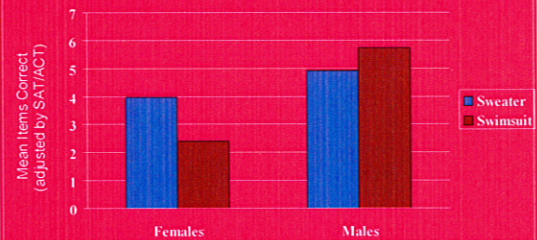
- Objectification Theory predicts that objectification leads to an array of psychological consequences: self-objectification, shame, restrained eating, and disrupted mental performance (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

Cognitive and Physical Functioning Consequences

- Chronic attention to physical appearance leaves fewer cognitive resources available for other mental and physical activities.



Math Performance



“Throwing Like a Girl”

Study: Anglo and African American girls with a more self-objectified view of their bodies threw a softball less effectively.

Since physical activity leads to better overall health, sexualization keeps girls “in their place,” limiting their movement in the world.



Girls who play sports

- Have better body images
- Are more resistant to media ideals of beauty and thinness
- Less likely to use drugs
- Less likely to get pregnant
- More likely to delay first sex
- Do better in science
- Have higher graduation rates

Where are the Women in Sports

- Women represent 40% of all participants and 3%-5% of all coverage in Sports Illustrated, ESPN, and news stations.



- Where are all those Olympic stars?

2004 Female Olympic Athletes



Body Dissatisfaction

Constant monitoring of appearance leads to:

- Feelings of shame about one's body (failure to live up to idealized standards)
- Anxiety about who/when/where one's body will be evaluated or exposed
- Even disgust and revulsion toward one's own body

Media Exposure Studies

38 experiments,
32 surveys,
2 interviews...

RESULTS:

Young women and girls exposed to beauty ideals in fashion magazines and t.v. are less satisfied with their bodies. For both White and Black teens, the more they *idealize* t.v. images, the more dissatisfied they are with their bodies.



Consequences for Mental Health

Frequent exposure to cultural beauty ideals demonstrated in numerous studies to be associated with:

- Increased eating disorders
- Lower self-esteem
- Higher rates of depressive symptoms

Objectification and Sexual Attitudes



- Exposure to rap music videos that contain images of women in subordinate roles, leads to a greater acceptance of teen dating violence (Johnson, Adams, Ashburn, and Reed, 1995)
- Frequent television viewing and pop music exposure leads to a greater acceptance of sexual harassment (Strouse, Goodwin, and Roscoe, 1994)

Consequences for Physical Health

- Link between body dissatisfaction and onset of cigarette smoking
- Girls with higher self-objectification are more likely to smoke.
- Emphasis in advertising that smoking helps control weight.



Consequences for Sexuality

- Self-objectification among teen girls associated with decreased condom use and reduced sexual assertiveness.
- Sexualization experiences in girlhood may negatively affect adult women's sexuality via greater body discomfort and shame:
 - Less likely to receive (not give) oral sex
 - Lower sexual assertiveness
 - Higher sexual risk-taking

Other Consequences

- To Boys and Men
- To Adult Women
- To Society
- Re: Abuse and Victimization

Boys and Men

Objectifying girls and women is integral to masculinity.



BUT these beliefs jeopardize boys' and men's ability to form intimate relationships with girls and women.

Exposure to pornography and objectifying television programs leads males to:

- use more sexual terms to describe "women"
- find real women less attractive
- be less sexually attracted to their own female partners

Women



The sexualization of girls contributes to the idealization of youth as the only good and beautiful stage of life.

Sales of anti-aging beauty products has reached 11 billion dollars.

Double-bind for adult women in the workplace:

Strive to look young to meet cultural sexualized ideals, yet competence and skills questioned because of youthful appearance.

Impact on Society



Sexism

- Adults and high schoolers exposed to sexualized and sexually objectifying mainstream media are more accepting of rape myths, sexual harassment, sex role stereotypes and adversarial sexual beliefs about relationships.
- Exposure to sexualized rap videos fosters negative perceptions of African-American women particularly.
- Undergraduate males exposed to sexualized content behaved in a more sexist manner toward female purported job applicants.

Girls' Educational Success



Math is tough!
Let's go shopping!

College women exposed to sexualized tv ads indicated less interest in math-science careers and endorsed lower leadership aspirations.

Sexualization may "prime" lower achievement orientation among girls and women.

Violence and Exploitation

B. Paul (2004): Study of "barely legal" porn:

Viewing such pornography leads to stronger mental associations between neutral images of children and words related to sex.

Constant exposure to sexualized images of girls may "train" us to view girls as "seductive"

Images of precocious sexuality in girls may normalize child abuse, prostitution and trafficking.



SLIPPAGE

- Studies have shown that adult men often misperceive friendliness in adult women as sexual interest (Abbey, 1982, 1987). Images of young girls who are made to look like adult women may evoke similar responses.



SLIPPAGE

- Images of precocious sexuality in girls may serve to normalize abusive practices such as child abuse, child prostitution, and the sexual trafficking of children.

New Norms?

- If the idealized female sexual partner is a 15- or 16-year-old girl, male consumers may demand pornography featuring such girls and the opportunity to pay for sex with them.

Is media viewing related?

Strouse, Goodwin, and Roscoe (1994) found that for boys and girls who were 11-16 years of age, frequent TV viewing and greater exposure to R- and X-rated films were each related to stronger acceptance of sexual harassment.

Among 7th and 8th graders, television viewing frequency and acceptance of sexual harassment was correlated for males. For females frequency of listening to popular music and watching music videos was related to more accepting attitudes towards sexual harassment (Strouse et. al., 1994).

The waters girls swim in

All women live in sexual objectification as fish live in water. -- Catherine MacKinnon

One Answer

Media Literacy

How to Read an Ad

The Gender Ads Project.
Created by Scott A. Lukas, Ph.D.
Created in 2002, South Lake Tahoe,
California.
<<http://www.genderads.com>>

Katherine Frith

- **Surface Meaning**
- **Intended Meaning**
- **The Cultural or Ideological**

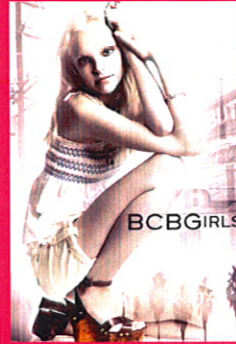
Erving Goffman

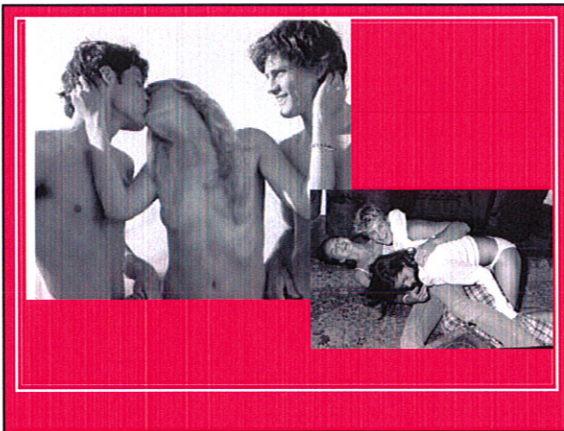
- Erving Goffman's classic *Gender Advertisements* (1979) offers an analysis of advertising. Goffman's analysis looks at the specific codes present in ads and considers what they say about society and social relationships.

Sut Jhally

- In *Advertising and the End of the World* director Sut Jhally focuses on the negative impacts of advertising on our social relations and the environment.
- One theme he looks at is normalization. In practically every contemporary magazine, women, as well as men, are given powerful messages about how their bodies should be and how they should act.

Let's look at some ads then. . .





Objecting to Objectification

- Provide health education that connects body objectification and body image to sexuality and nutrition
- Challenge gender stereotypes and homophobia in relation to sports
- Engage in embodied practices (i.e., yoga)
- Media literacy, sexual literacy, support "normal" sexuality development

Redefine Empowerment



You can't turn off the world. These images are everywhere. So learn to read this world and read it well.

Write to companies *They write back!*

Dear Sara,

I received your letter about the Swan and noted that you wonder whether the series will lead to even more ordinary young women feeling that they aren't good enough the way they are. My answer is brief. I don't think so. My view of young women is that they are perfectly able to make their own independent decisions. Thus I see no risk in broadcasting the series. Best Regards,

Start a GIRLcott

- A group of 13- to 16-year-old girls asked girls across the country to "girlcott" Abercrombie & Fitch until they take off the market T-shirts emblazoned with slogans they say degrade the girls that wear them.
- Who needs brains when you have these? reads one.



Ask questions

- Why are the girls who appear on Survivor asked if they would be willing to pose for a centerfold?
- Why MUST female volleyball players play in bikinis?
- Why would a six-year-old need a padded bra?

Unveil the Fraud



- www.Fluideffect.com
Go to Before/After photos.
- "Unveil the Fraud" -- google this site
- www.reginaldpike/dove/

Organizations to go to:

Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
Dads and Daughters
Common Sense Media
Media Awareness Network
See Jane, Inc.
Girls, Inc.
Hardy Girls Healthy Women